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Revision of the
malayalam New Testament
(1887)

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To

*The Revered Committee of the
Madras Auxiliary Bible Society*

and

*Much esteemed Members of the
Malayalam Revision Committee, as well as all those
who take an interest in the progress of the Revision
of the Malayalam New Testament.*

Gentlemen and Brethren,

We, Delegates of the Basel Evangelical Mission, find ourselves placed in a most critical position. When we look at the original agreement made in 1871 (with the encouragement and co-operation of the Madras Auxiliary Bible Society), between the Church Mission, London Mission, Reformed Syrian Church, and Basel Mission, concerning the Revision of Dr. Gundert's New Testament, which (page 14) "has been agreed upon by the British and Foreign Bible Society as the basis of the new version", and consider expressions as the following: (page 10) "the character of Dr. Gundert's translation on the whole be preserved", (page 14) "few verbal alterations necessary" (which are borne out by 35 alterations in 19 chapters of St. Matthew in all; page 12) etc., we find that matters have altered very considerably since then. Although a great deal more has been granted by our

Delegates than was requested, still further demands are made upon us. We are greatly distressed on account of the views and demands expressed by two members at the Union Revision Meeting at Cochin (from 9th to 11th September 1885), and the Notes on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John received towards the end of 1886 and the beginning of 1887. As we cannot adopt some of the views promulgated, nor see a possibility of acceding to all the demands proffered, we find it necessary to acquaint you with the state of things, to give publicity to our views of the manner in which we think the work might most likely succeed, and to ask for your help in the present emergency.

In conclusion we beg to mention that the Notes that kept coming in from time to time required careful thought and consideration, hence it was impossible to address you earlier on the subject. We trust that the paper accompanying this letter may be brought before the next meeting (15th April 1887), and are hopeful that matters may be satisfactorily arranged and an imminent rupture averted.

Believe us,

Gentlemen and Brethren,

Yours in Christ most devoted,

E. Diez.

J. Knobloch.

S. Walter.

F. Matthissen.

15th March 1887.

GRW 166^a



NOTES OF THE DELEGATES

of the Basel German Evangelical Mission anent the Revision
of the Malayalam New Testament, translated by Dr. Gundert
from the Greek.

I. *The part taken in, and the work done by the Delegates of the Basel Mission in the Revision of Dr. Gundert's Malayalam New Testament up to 1884.*

We beg to impress upon the Committee that our late Brethren *Mr. Fritz* and *Mr. Müller* engaged in the work of revising the Malayalam New Testament translated by *Dr. Gundert* not because they felt *dissatisfied* with his translation, but to *meet* the wishes of our Brethren of the C. M. S. and L. M. S. in South-Malabar, *i. e.* in Cochin and Travancore, and those of the *Madras Auxiliary Bible Society* to produce a union version for the Malayalam speaking Christian and non-Christian population of Malabar. The above mentioned Missionaries took great pains in the revision work and in preparing a part of the tentative version. After their departure several of our number have been busily engaged in preparing the necessary notes and in helping to carry the New Testament through the press. After it had been agreed upon at our last meeting on the 10th September 1885 to go once more through the New Testament, three to four of us met with the knowledge and at the expense of the Bible Society in Malabar in April 1886 and prepared Joint-notes expressing our views on the four Gospels and the Acts.

II. *The revised Malayalam New Testament, although the joint-work of all the Delegates belonging to the Malayalam Revision Committee was partly disowned at the last Bible Revision Meeting (9th to 11th September 1885), but in order to avoid an imminent rupture, farther revision was agreed upon.* In spite of this we have been *unable* to consider the work a *failure*.

After 13-14 years' hard work in which all the Delegates of the C. M. S., L. M. S., B. E. M. S., and a body of Syrians had engaged, it was thought a *union* version had been produced which only required a final touch here and there. The consideration that the revision had been carried on for such a long time, during which it was agreed at different sessions to choose such and such a word which had *retrospective* power, that modelling and remodelling of one and the same sentence had given rise to some slight discrepancies which required removing; the reflection that the *Textus Receptus* which had enjoyed a monopoly till then should no longer be our standard but the superior Greek Text which underlies the English Revised New Testament, and that consequently spurious readings ought to be removed, and doubtful ones corrected, in short the whole to be harmonized with the improved text; this is the final touch that we expected would be given and which we called *filing and polishing**. This honest *confession* was, however, no *concession* as to the inferiority of the work done. As it stands even now, not only the testimonies obtained in British Malabar which we represented at the Revision Committee, but also all the Native Delegates of the South (as the Minutes of September 1885 amply show) are entirely in favour of the Revised Version. Special mention ought to be made of the Syrian Christians. Not only the *Athanasiian* party to whom (Dr.) *Malpan Philippos* belongs, but also the *Dionesian*

* In accordance with these views we have prepared our Notes. (See under I.)

party of Syrians, as well as that headed by *Bishop Mellus* are unanimously in favour of the Revised Version, as it comes, they say, so near the time-honoured *Peschito*, they use, and throws new light on passages in it hitherto more or less obscure.

When the last special meeting was called we knew it was on account of the “troubled state of feeling anent the Revised Malayalam New Testament (12)”, and though we expected to hear about some further modifications, we were perfectly taken aback when we learned from the lips of two European Delegates who had their share in moulding the present version along with us, nay partly *before* we entered the Committee, that it was not popular (1.5). In spite of the encouraging testimony, we have already quoted, we felt there and then the weight of the verdict and the apparent *hopelessness* of satisfying all parties. Yet anxious not to precipitate a rupture, we were temporising in the hope that a solution of the difficulty might yet be found. With this end in view we engaged to lend our help in future also.

III. *The printed Notes on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which were prepared for the next Revision Meeting, are suggestive of failure, nay even of a rupture.*

We have been sadly disappointed at the profuseness of the Notes on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which fill 272 pages against 241 pages of print of the New Testament. This represents a good deal of work done by the *Venerable Archdeacon Koshi* in the way of arranging the Notes of 18 different bodies and individuals. We, however, regret to see that the Notes of 12 different Committees and persons appear under the names of their authors instead of under that of the chief Delegate of some Society or body. Had we invited Notes, we would certainly have worked them up into *our*

Joint-notes. It is evident that as each Society has only *one* vote, no additional votes can be accorded to persons outside the Committee.

Had those numerous remarks appeared during the last 14 years, when the revision was going on, we should have considered them but natural, at the present juncture, however, they are painfully suggestive. We conclude that at the beginning of the revision people in the South either did not take enough interest, or that enough was not done to interest them in the revision, and we are therefore surprised that all at once a certain number and class of educated men in the South have found time to compile Notes, and we cannot help thinking, that there is *something artificial* in the present movement. It seems that the Notes are meant to support the partial verdict pronounced against the Revised Version at the session in 1885, and thus to create a *motive* for a thorough re-revision; a retrograde movement to be deprecated.

Although according to the stipulation in 1871—a printed paper which we regret is not known enough—Dr. Gundert's translation was to be the base “in no wise altering the style or character, but not to contain words unknown in Travancore and Cochin”,—yet after 14 years of Revision work there is carried on in these Notes a systematic weeding out of Dr. Gundert's words and grammatical forms—a proceeding casting silently blame on all who were engaged in the work of Revision.

As to the Notes in *detail*, we regret that some good and useful remarks are buried, as it were, among a number of inferior and trivial ones, assuming (such is our impression) the aspect of having been *preconceived*. A great many are simple matters of *personal* linguistic taste, putting tit for tat. Suggestions and assertions are made which when followed bring us into conflict with sound dogmatical and exegetical

principles, while other Notes, assuming an amusing air of superiority, give verdicts and impart instruction. With due regard for all that is *valuable* in the Notes and hints, we cannot help stating that there is much that is annoying and irritating in many of them, and that it is most unpleasant to think how many hours we shall have to spend in this incongenial air. But the most painful part is the prospect of having to tread over the old ground most minutely and to debate on things which appeared settled long ago. These Notes then present themselves to us as the most eloquent answer of *non-compromise* to the *good-will* displayed by us at the last meeting in order to avoid a rupture; *they drive at a rupture.*

IV. *Serious hinderances to the future progress of the Revision work arising from the expectations entertained of Re-revision.* It is the position the chief European Delegates of the C.M.S. and the L.M.S. have occupied at the last meeting and shown also in their printed Notes which causes us to pause.

1. a. We see ourselves placed under the painful necessity of pointing the M.A.B. Society to the utterance of *Mr. Mateer* (page 3): "By this Revision the Basel Mission very properly gains in economy, their Scriptures being now printed at the cost of the Bible Society instead of, as formerly, at the expense of the Mission." This assertion was made in spite of the remark (page 2) by *Dr. Philippos*: "They (the Syrians) read the revised version much and consider the meaning plainer and desire it *alone for future use*" and others' testimonies. Although we could not make out why that painful remark was made *then*, we kept quiet. But in the light thrown by the above discussed Notes on *Mr. Mateer's* assertion it begins to wear for us a serious aspect. We will not attempt to refute such an unpleasant and unfounded state-

ment, but are forced to say that it looks like an attack on the work of the Union Version *as it is*, and has come into existence with the co-operation of *Mr. Mateer*, and also like a refusal of any kindred work that may be turned out *in future*, and we do not see how we can hope to produce a New Testament acceptable to the *London Missionary Society*, one of the parties in the agreement entered upon in 1871.

b. We would draw your attention to a difficulty of a similar character which is contained in *Mr. Richards'* remark (page 4): "But as to the reading of the Revised Version in our churches, it should be remembered that we must move in a body and cannot in our church hastily, or as individuals, adopt an imperfect version not yet satisfactory to all the Delegates themselves. When the time comes the *Provincial Council* which represents the Native Church should ask the *Bishop* to authorize the Revised Version".

When this vote is compared with selection of Papers 1871, page 14, where we read III. "and the Church Mission consider it right that Dr. Gundert's version thus rendered intelligible to all their congregations by the *few verbal alterations* necessary should be the standard version of Malabar and to this the German Mission also consent", it will be observed that, as far as the Church Mission is concerned, a change had occurred in the *contracting party*, i. e. through certain ecclesiastical arrangements a *new court*, considered competent to declare the New Testament fit to be read in Churches, has *silently* taken the place of the former.

Whereas Native clergymen of the Church Mission and Syrian Church have declared for the revised version, the Notes prepared by several clergymen and members of the Church Mission, as stated above, convince us of the contrary and show how slight the hope is of compiling a New Testament that promises to satisfy *His Lordship the Bishop* of

Travancore and Cochin, the Provincial Council, and the Missionary Conference of the Church Mission Society.

c. A difficulty quite different to the above stated will arise from the moment we materially deviate from the *style* and *grammar* of the *Revised Version*.

All those who have expressed their approval of the Revised Version and regarded the language as “*standard language*”, whether Missionaries of the Church Mission, or Church Mission Native clergymen and laymen, or Syrian clergymen and laymen, or the Basel Mission Malayalam Churches and ordained and unordained Missionaries, or parties with whose opinion we are not acquainted, are sure to repudiate the work after we have *remodelled* it.

We are thus in danger of *jeopardising* the existence of what has been hitherto effected at a *great sacrifice* of time, money, etc. and of *dissatisfying in future all the parties concerned*. We *feel* our inability to satisfy the expectations entertained of us. To avoid Scylla we shall fall into Charybdis.

2. As to the time *necessary to go through the work*, we have the Notes on Matthew (101), Mark (33), Luke (70), and John (68) before us. They occupy 272 pages with an average of 8,337 Notes, or say 8,500 Notes. It is intended to spend in April 1887 14 working days, each of 6 hours, on revision. This makes 84 hours or 5040 minutes and something like 10 Notes in 6 minutes. If every thing goes on smoothly, we could scarcely master the matter in so short a time. When we, however, remember that repeatedly contested points are brought up again, and in addition to this all the different questions which were never mooted before but are now newly proffered, we cannot expect to make much progress. How different is this demand from the 30 Notes in nineteen chapters of Matthew (1871, page 12) as asked by *Mr. Baker* in the very beginning!

3. As to the style, grammatical structure etc. of the language.

As we are on the eve of a crisis it is well that we should state also our linguistic difficulties which we do not see a possibility of overcoming.

We have again and again been reminded that a number of considerations ought to guide us in the revision. We name some of the most prominent ones:

a. That the larger number of Christians of the Church Mission and London Mission Societies deserved more consideration (p. 4. 6) than the smaller of the Basel one, i. e. that the language ought to suit the majority of Christians.

b. That for the sake of the larger number of less educated men or of congregations composed of lower castes (p. 4.) the translation ought to be lowered correspondingly, i. e. the language is to suit the uneducated.

c. That a version should not be *literal*, which is styled "slavishly" p. 6.

d. That a *Malayalam phrase* might be used for a difficult Sanskrit word (7).

e. That *hard* words, i. e. Sanskrit words, and *new terms* should be avoided (6).

As to these different points, the reasoning may commend itself to persons unacquainted with translation work, but it will not be regarded sound by any one at all familiar with its difficulties.

We wish it to be plainly understood that we have no inclination to be parties to deteriorating the language, as we are not revising for this or that section, but for *four millions* and *odd Malayalis*, i. e. for the whole *Malabar Country*, from the *Chandragiri* river to *Trevandrum*. We must remind our fellow-delegates that education in British Malabar has been of a high standard for the last 100 to 150 years and that

education has been spreading far and wide, especially during the last 30 years, and is continually spreading. Can we conscientiously *lower* the standard? Besides where is it known in the annals of Missions that the better as well as the less educated classes have different versions in the same language? Had we to make a Malayalam version for the high castes only, our friends would be surprised at the hard words!—We shall be told, however, that the numerous Notes are not made by less but by better educated men. We can, of course, sympathise with their feelings as they have been accustomed to *Bailey's* version for so many years and are called upon to sacrifice homely recollections, the more so as we also use the revised German version (1883) and especially the revised English version (1885), where surprises are frequent. Yet with all due respect to their feelings about the Revised Version we are afraid the reverence for *Bailey* has developed with them into more than a lawful enthusiasm for the work of a *man*. We too admire *Bailey* and shall always admire him, because he has done a good work and achieved much with small means, but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that his language is more *Anglo-Malayalam* than *Dravido-Malayalam*.

It will suit persons who are averse to anything new, or who are more accustomed to think in English than in other languages, but we miss the flow of the Dravidian spirit.

We further consider it a duty neither to add to, nor deduct from the *Word of God* and therefore we cannot be too *scrupulous* in the rendering of the original. *But scrupulousness* is neither *pedantry* nor *servility*. As experiments with *paraphrastic* New Testaments have not succeeded, and a merely rounded and well sounding language without regard to the original, as for instance, *Dr. Bower's* (which is found fault with in many quarters) has been short-lived, we do not feel inclined to try that track, and are averse to replace *words* by

phrases. Lastly we are surprised to learn that *hard* words and *new* terms are to be avoided. We must not forget that Malayalam requires to be transformed into a *Christian* language and that new coined words cannot be avoided. In saying this, we are in good company. Paul and the Apostles *coined* words for Christian ideas. What would remain of English when *repentance*, *justification*, *sanctification* and other Latin words were weeded out? Take those three words and ask educated Englishmen what they mean and you will be disappointed by their answers, because the word cannot be explained by *linguistic* helps only, but requires a change of heart and consequently of the religious views of a person. As we are training our Catechists in Exegesis, Symbolics, Dogmatics, Ethics, Prophecy, etc., *not* in English but in the *Vernacular* we know from experience the boon of the Apostles' having giveu us words which are the receptacles of adequate ideas. We are not startled but rather amused when we turn from the Christian Lyrics in use in the Southern Missions which team with Sanskrit, and are told such and such, perhaps a Catechist does not understand a certain word in the New Testament. We are forced either to consider the remark as referring to an exceptional case, or that those men have received a poor education,—a thought charity forbids us to entertain. It is true we should have liked to see the kind of men alluded to in the Union Meeting and in the Notes, but our repeated wishes were never complied with, and from this we must conclude that there must be *some* reason for preventing us *seeing for ourselves!!!*

V. *Means to secure a successful termination of the Work.*
We require and propose:

1. *A guarantee.*—After 15 years' laborious work we consider it our duty to appeal to the *good sense* and *brotherly*

love and understanding of the Revision Committee that before we embark in further work, spending our time and strength, as well as the money of the Bible Society for nought, a *guarantee* be given that the work will not receive the cold shoulder after it is finished, but find ready acceptance. Some *ways and means* of proceeding ought to be devised to spare us at the end disappointment. If the Bible Revision Committee as such does not command sufficient respect to ensure our work being considered a conscientious one, why do we further trouble ourselves to beat the air?

Let us do justice to the old agreement and not go further away from it, or let it be plainly said that the original agreement is to be considered henceforth a *dead letter*.

2. *Condensed Notes.* When we look at the impenetrable thicket of notes, in which we have become entangled, we have to settle two questions:

a. What are we to do at *present*? How are we to get out fairly and yet do justice to the Notes in hand?

b. In *future*, however, we must insist on the Notes being presented under *four* heads only. We regret that p. 19, §3 has not been more accurately drawn up, *i.e.* it ought to have been plainly stated that the *chief* Delegate of *each* body is to collect the opinion of *his friends*, working them up into *one* note and sending it to *Archdeacon Koshi Koshi*. It is evident that if this is not insisted upon, the work is unnecessarily hampered and delayed. We have given all our remarks in *one* note and intend doing so for the future; had we, however, not done so, our notes would have occupied four times as much space.

We beg to remind you that any Notes which disagree with the spirit of "Selection of papers of 1871" ought *not to be presented in future*.

In connection with this we wish to say that *transliterated* Greek can scarcely be recognised. Greek ought to be printed with Greek types which can be easily done at the Basel Mission Press at Mangalore.

3. *Adhering to the Text given.* It should be clearly understood that the *Revised version* as printed in *Cottayam* 1884 is the *Malayalam text* which is to be subjected to filing and polishing, that the Cambridge edition of the Greek Testament be the *Greek text* we go by, and that *Gundert* and *Bailey*, as well as the new *English Revised Version* should be consulted in the course of our work.

4. *Filing not revising.* By filing we understand, to use a simile, not a smelting and recasting of the whole, but an adjusting or improving and polishing of the work done. Keeping in mind that the revision was going on for 15 years nobody will be surprised to hear, that there are passages where the reading can be improved by a slight alteration; there are also technical and theological terms (as already observed) which were agreed upon in the course of the revision, and lastly the appearance of the English Revised Version imposes upon us the duty of making our edition conform to the Greek underlying it. We consider now the University edition as the Greek text to go by.

5. *A necessary staff of Native assistants.* As we cannot acknowledge any European as a competent judge on every point of the language, we must insist that each Society be represented by at least two able Natives.

6. *The casting vote.* In the selection of papers 1871 we read pp. 14. 15. "Mr. Fritz as senior shall have a casting vote." We beg that this right, accorded to the chairman at the beginning of the revision, may be upheld in the ensuing meetings also.

7. *Malayalam, as the language of business of the Revision Committee.* In due Christian regard for the Native members of the Revision Committee who are not able to follow a discussion in English, we consider it necessary, as already agreed to in the last United meeting, that the discussion should be carried on in Malayalam.

8. *A Book of Minutes.* It is a matter of great regret that there does not exist a book of proceedings, signed at the end of each meeting by the different Delegates. We, Basel Missionaries, feel this deficiency the more as we are accustomed to a businesslike way of dealing with official affairs. In the interest of work we must insist upon this, that in future a regular account of the proceedings be written *during* and *not after* the Conference. By doing so we avoid going over the old ground and can easily refer to points settled; we further prevent the rise of any suspicion that one or the other Delegate had taken advantage of the situation.

This book must be with the *Secretary Mr. Mateer*; the *Chairman Mr. Diez* wishes that one of our Native Assistants, whom we would bring with us, should write down the proceedings in *Malayalam* for his guidance.

9. *Civility.* At the beginning of the work the Brethren in the South were in the habit of asking us *kindly* to yield on this or that point, but of late we have had reason to complain of a certain want of courtesy, so that we have been unable to help the impression, that painful remarks to us were simply made to force us to withdraw. We are at last forced to speak and to ask that we may be spared in future any humiliating treatment and the assumption of airs of superiority, which even brotherly love can only bear to a certain degree.

That we have sacrificed our holidays in 1886 to make the Notes and are on the point of doing so again in 1887 in order to help further in the revision, will show the Malayalam Bible Revision Committee and the Madras Auxiliary Bible Society that we are anxious to assist in the work undertaken, but before we can move a step forward we wish to see the above mentioned points satisfactorily settled.

As we think it necessary the M. A. B. S. should be aware of the difficulties ahead in order to help in adjusting differences, and as there may arise a difference of opinion on some of the first 8 points, we have communicated this paper to them also and ask them to make known their wishes and views to the Revision Committee for their guidance.

E. Diez,

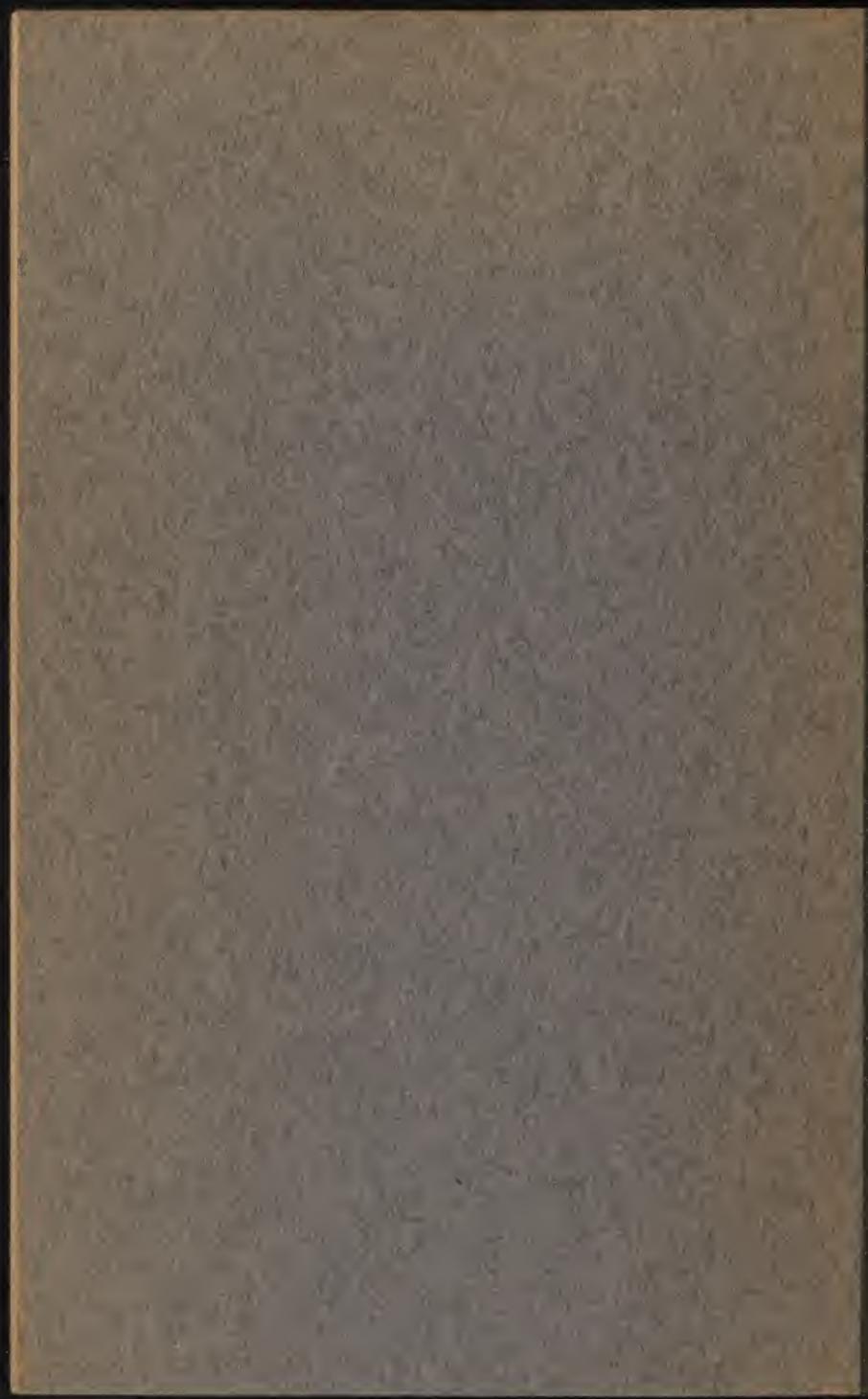
Chairman, Rev. Com.

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To

*The Revered Committee of the
Madras Auxiliary Bible Society*

and

*Much esteemed Members of the
Malayalam Revision Committee, as well as all those
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of the Malayalam New Testament.*

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